IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A superabsorbent foam comprising ~~at least one of (a)~~ a superabsorbent synthetic fiber ~~and (b) a natural fiber selected from the group consisting of apple fiber, orange fiber, tomato fiber, wheat fiber, oat fiber, and mixtures thereof~~, the superabsorbent foam obtainable by foaming a polymerizable aqueous mixture comprising at least a 50 mol% neutralized acid-functional monoethylenically unsaturated monomer or at least one basic polymer, a crosslinker, a superabsorbent fiber, and at least one surfactant, and subsequently polymerizing and/or crosslinking the foamed mixture, wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture contains from 0.01 to 10% by weight of superabsorbent fiber, based on the monomer.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) The superabsorbent foam of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture contains from 0.1 to 5% by weight of the superabsorbent fiber, based on the monomer.

5. (Previously presented) The superabsorbent foam of claim 1 wherein the foam is surface postcrosslinked.

6. (Currently amended) The superabsorbent foam of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least a 50% aqueous sodium or potassium hydroxide solution neutralized acrylic acid, a crosslinker containing at least two ethylenically unsaturated double bonds, a radical-forming initiator, a superabsorbent fiber comprising a hydrolyzed and subsequently crosslinked copolymer of isobutene and maleic anhydride, and at least one surfactant.

7. (Currently amended) The superabsorbent foam of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least one basic polymer selected from the group consisting of polymers containing vinylamine units, polymers containing vinylguanidine units, polymers containing dialkylaminoalkyl(meth)acrylamide units, polyethyleneimines, ethyleneimine-grafted polyamidoamines, and polydiallyldimethylammonium chlorides.

8. (Currently amended) A process for producing a superabsorbent foam having improved wet strength, which comprises foaming a crosslinkable aqueous mixture comprising at least a 50 mol% neutralized acid-functional monoethylenically unsaturated monomer or at least one basic polymer, a crosslinker, at least one of (a) a superabsorbent synthetic fiber and (b) a natural fiber selected from the group consisting of apple fiber, orange fiber, tomato fiber, wheat fiber, and mixtures thereof, and at least one surfactant, and subsequently polymerizing the monomer in the foamed mixture or crosslinking the basic polymer in the foamed mixture to form a hydrogel foam, wherein the aqueous mixture comprises from 0.01 to 10% by weight of the superabsorbent fiber and/or 0.05 to 10% by weight of the natural fiber.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously presented) The process of claim 8 wherein the foaming of the aqueous polymerizable mixture is effected by dissolving an inert gas in the mixture at from 2 to 400 bar and subsequently decompressing the mixture to atmospheric.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously presented) The process of claim 8 wherein the aqueous mixtures comprise from 0.1 to 5% by weight of the superabsorbent fiber.

13. (Previously presented) An article comprising the superabsorbent foam of claim 1.

14. (Previously presented) The article of claim 13 selected from the group consisting of a hygiene article to absorb body fluids, a dressing article to cover wounds, and a ventilation system filter.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Cancelled)

20. (New) A superabsorbent foam comprising at least one natural fiber selected from the group consisting of apple fiber, orange fiber, tomato fiber, wheat fiber, oat fiber, and mixtures thereof;

said superabsorbent foam obtainable by foaming a polymerizable aqueous mixture comprising at least a 50 mol% neutralized acid-functional monoethylenically unsaturated monomer or at least one basic polymer, a crosslinker, the natural fiber, and at least one surfactant, and subsequently polymerizing and/or crosslinking the foamed mixture,

wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture contains from 0.05 to 10% by weight of natural fiber, based on the monomer.

21. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 20 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture contains from 0.1 to 5% by weight of the natural fiber, based on the monomer.

22. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 20 wherein the foam is surface postcrosslinked.

23. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 20 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least a 50% aqueous sodium or potassium hydroxide solution neutralized acrylic acid, a crosslinker containing at least two ethylenically unsaturated double bonds, a radical-forming initiator, the natural fiber, and at least one surfactant.

24. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 20 wherein the polymerizable aqueous mixture comprises at least one basic polymer selected from the group consisting of polymers containing vinylamine units, polymers containing vinylguanidine units, polymers containing dialkylaminoalkyl (meth)acrylamide units, polyethyleneimines, ethyleneimine-grafted polyamidoamines, and polydiallyldimethylammonium chlorides.

25. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 1 further comprising from 1% to 60% water, by weight of the superabsorbent foam.

26. (New) The superabsorbent foam of claim 20 further comprising from 1% to 60% water, by weight of the superabsorbent foam.